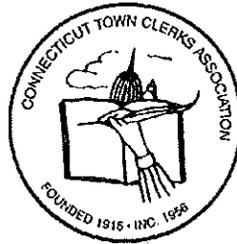


# **Connecticut Town Clerks Association, Inc.**

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## **2011 Legislative Committee**

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Written Testimony of  
CTCA's Legislative Committee  
Government Administration and Elections Committee  
Friday, March 11, 2011

The Connecticut Town Clerks Association (CTCA) opposes **House Joint Resolution No. 33 – Proposing an Amendment to the State Constitution to Provide for Early Voting**. However, CTCA as indicated to the leadership of the GAE Committee and the Secretary of the State supports House Joint Resolution No. 88 previously heard by this committee.

The Association supports the efforts of the Secretary of the State with regard to Election Administration reform, and understands that any changes relating to Early Voting of any type must have this Constitutional change in order to move forward in a positive way, however we are not in favor of the specific method of Absentee Ballots as stated in this Resolution.

Our Association has done extensive research on the issues around No Excuse Absentee Ballot as well as Early Voting options. It is important to note that these two options be distinguished from one another. Each provides the voter with the opportunity to vote prior to a single Election Day but they have very different processes, methods and costs associated with implementation.

Our current system for processing Absentee Ballots could not handle the increase in volume under a No Excuse system. The No Excuse option would quickly strain an outdated, inefficient and manual process for mailing, accounting for and counting of Absentee Ballots

Our Association is concerned about the potential for fraud in this highly manual process when the volume increases by two or three hundred percent. The current system does not provide for the security and storage of large number of ballots within the vault at many town halls. Also at higher volumes, there is greater opportunity for errors. It would be increasingly difficult to properly ensure the ballots are being voted by the applicant. Town Clerks agree with the State Elections Enforcement Commission that the potential for abuse is greater under an Absentee Ballot system than under an Early Voting Polling site where an individual would need to produce identification before being presented with a ballot.

We are concerned that many voters under an Absentee Ballot system may be disenfranchised. With Absentee Ballot voting, many more votes are not counted due to envelopes having no signature, not received in time or being mismarked. The State of Missouri had to discount 8,000 Absentee Ballots in 2008 for these reasons. Those 8,000 ballots could have changed the outcome of the election. At an Early Voting Polling site these voters would have been given another chance to vote their ballots correctly and not be disenfranchised.

States that have chosen to use No Excuse Absentee Ballots typically have County forms of government and have centralized Voting Centers where the process is administered by Election Officials whose sole purpose is to run the Election.

In conclusion, while the Town Clerks Association does not support the concept of No Excuse Absentee Balloting, we recognize the interest and need to offer voting alternatives that can address turnout, while keeping the integrity of the process as well as cost consideration in these difficult budget times. The Town Clerks would welcome to be part of this discussion and help come up with some solutions that will benefit all our constituents.

Respectfully submitted,

Antoinette Chick Spinelli  
Chair, Legislative Committee, Connecticut Town Clerks Association  
Town Clerk, Waterbury